

CATERHAM VALLEY PARISH COUNCIL RESPONSE TO THE TANDRIDGE LOCAL PLAN CONSULTATION

Caterham Valley Parish Council are of the opinion that insufficient time has been allowed to comment on the Local Plan document as the Christmas and New Year holiday period made it difficult to have time to digest the Approaches and Issues document along with the all of the supporting documentation.

Tandridge District Council has been required by Central Government to implement a Local Plan due to inward migration from London in respect of mass immigration to the London area and South East. The demand for housing is not completely due to the needs of the existing population who will suffer greatly if 9,400 houses/units are built in Tandridge. As Tandridge is 94% green belt it appears inevitable that green belt boundaries will be eroded resulting in a loss of open countryside around towns and villages. Developers should be obliged to build on land on brown field sites which they already own. Caterham Valley Parish Council would strongly object to the loss of its amenity, leisure, retail and business areas to housing.

Caterham Valley Parish Council wishes to make the following comments to the Local Plan consultation.

Objectives

Objective 7 in Section 8 on page 24 of the Approaches and Issues document which relates to the Town Centres and Retail & Leisure and which states that we should 'support our town centres to be vital and viable through encouraging wider diverse retail and leisure opportunities as well as regeneration' is vital for Caterham Valley.

One has to ask the question why Tandridge District Council has not been pursuing these objectives in the past in respect of Caterham Valley. Disregard of both residents and Caterham Valley Parish Council objections to unwelcome developments is not indicative of a favourable outcome in the future.

The Vision

Caterham Valley Parish Council believes this document presents a currently unrealistic vision for Caterham as inappropriate development has already taken place which has caused irreparable damage to the town. It will take major investment and forward thinking to reverse the damage of the unimaginative developments that have been built. Retail and commercial units are disappearing through permitted development and lack of foresight for the town centre. In the last few years Caterham Valley has lost the following commercial sites – Bronzeoak House, Caterham Cars, Valley Pub, Orbit House, Adult Education Centre & Social Services sites and with Quadrant House in Croydon Road, which has just been given a change of use and potentially Maybrook House in the Godstone Road also under threat, Caterham will have no large commercial units left for employment. This is not an exhaustive list as there have been many other smaller businesses which have closed due to new residential developments. This Local Plan will not be passed until 2017 and at the rate of development and change of use from commercial to residential, this vision will be impossible to implement for Caterham unless current changes of commercial use to residential development cease immediately.

Caterham has been the underdog in Tandridge for a number of years. While we are encouraged that the Caterham Town Centre Working Group is reviewing the facilities and amenities in Caterham, we are concerned that this is another initiative that will not come to fruition until 2018 which leaves a great deal of time for further damage to the Caterham area without any controls in place to regenerate and enhance the area.

Caterham Valley Parish Council are in agreement with Caterham on the Hill Parish Council's view that a main issue is how to maintain a quality of life and environment while accommodating a realistic proportion of the new development which the Government seeks to impose on our small town. We too have serious concerns about the level of development potentially planned for our area and the additional detrimental effect this will

have to the already congested roads. Caterham should not be the area that suffers most from further overdevelopment due to the number of houses required to be built on 6% off the total area of Tandridge, causing incalculable costs in social and environmental terms.

Housing

As Tandridge is 94% green belt, it is unrealistic to expect to accommodate 9,400 new homes in 6% of the area, predominantly Caterham Valley, Caterham on the Hill, Whyteleafe and Warlingham over the next 20 years.

The solution of a completely new self supporting settlement which is Approach 6 on page 33 of the Approaches and Issues document, with transport links, shops, surgery and schools would go a long way to alleviating the serious issues that Caterham contends with currently and which would be vastly exacerbated by accommodating even a portion of the 9,400 of the potential new homes. Our current roads, transport system, GP surgeries, dentists, schools could not cope with the infrastructure requirements that development of this kind would require.

The Local Plan consultation document lists sites for potential development in Caterham. The emerging CR3 Forum Neighbourhood Plan lists sites that are able to support new development and those they consider unsustainable. Caterham Valley Parish Council would oppose any development on our current green spaces including but not exclusive to Timberhill Playground, White Knobs ground, Stafford Road Recreation Ground and Tillingdown Playground, all of which are listed in the HELAA. Caterham on the Hill have also listed green spaces where they would oppose development. Caterham Valley Parish Council would support the retention of the current Green Belt but are adamant that green spaces in built up areas are vitally important for the well being and general health of the local population.

The wooded hillsides surrounding Caterham Valley gives a rural feel to the area and the existing Green Belt contains and enhances the rural nature. The A.G.L.V. 016 above Longsdon Way, Church Hill open space and Timberhill Recreation Ground are essential in maintaining an environment that is conducive to resident's enjoyment and wellbeing.

Caterham Valley Parish Council believes that TPOs should be upheld and properly enforced unless there is a justified reason, such as disease, for the destruction of protected trees. Developers should be heavily fined in the case of unapproved cutting down of these valuable assets.

If CIL payments of 25% for a Neighbourhood Plan area will be applicable to Caterham Valley Parish Council for new developments following the acceptance of the Neighbourhood Plan and the remainder is apportioned to Tandridge, Caterham Valley Parish Council are concerned that Tandridge will not contribute a sufficient portion of the 75% of remaining monies to Caterham to support our continued growth.

In Economy and Tourism point 11.8.1 states that the NPPF and its supporting PPG require local planning authorities to build a strong, competitive economy in order to create jobs and prosperity. How can Caterham do this when its employment sites are given to permitted development?

Economy and Tourism point 11.8.6 states that the Economic Needs Assessment recommends that all existing employment sites should be retained. Caterham needs to retain employment sites and encourage employment or we will be a dormitory town.

Approach 1, Point C on page 43 gives an option to identify and protect key employment sites and intensify existing sites within the district. It goes on to say 'directions to remove permitted development rights and adding conditions to planning permissions to restrict the use of permitted development rights, where this can

be justified'. Yet on page 43 the footnote says that this is not an option and it is likely that planning permission will continue to be granted. What then are our viable options to retain our employment space?

There is a concentration of elderly person flats in Caterham when what is needed are 3 bedroom family homes to avoid our young people having to move out of the district to more affordable housing and older people moving in, thus further over stretching doctors surgeries and after care facilities. The demolition of larger family homes should be discouraged along with back garden development. People will always have a need for larger family homes either because of the increase in family size or economically as income increases. We should strive for a housing mix as the NPPF requires.

Developers are unwilling or unable to build affordable housing due to land being expensive; most profit is gained by building flats. There is already an oversupply of flats in Caterham Valley.

With the continued selloff of office space in Caterham Valley there is a loss of employment opportunity resulting in loss of investment in the town and a lack of jobs locally.

Lack of facilities for young people in Caterham Valley is a cause for concern. Again to develop any of the local playground / recreation grounds where young people go to play is very undesirable.

Transport

Our local train service cannot cope with further large numbers of people. Of the top 10 most crowded trains in the UK in 2014, the 06.35 service Caterham to Victoria was at number 6.

There is heavy reliance on the use of cars in our district due to public transport limitations thus making the use of the car essential to access areas outside the town. The resulting pollution and congestion and the reluctance of people to walk can lead to ill health.

Parking

Caterham does not have adequate parking currently and further developments with inadequate parking will exacerbate already stretched roads.

Caterham Valley Parish Council accepts that the CR3 area will continue to have development, however the CR3 Neighbourhood Plan should also be a prime consideration when considering any future expansion in this area.

On page 9 in the Strategic context section of the Approaches and Issues document it states that 71.6% of residents in paid employment in Tandridge commute outside the district to work. With 29,000 residents in the CR3 area, and allowing for those who do not commute, this means that a large portion of our residents travel to get to work. Therefore the continued lack of parking for cars whose owners commute each day is now inexcusable.

Education

There is currently no sixth form or technical college in the CR3 area and this would be advantageous. The high number of private schools is due in part to poor state education; the two primary schools in Caterham Valley, Marden Lodge and St. John's have performed badly in recent assessments. De Stafford School is improving but needs to expand to make better use of its facilities. Caterham School is an asset to the town. Kent and Croydon children should not be allocated places in Tandridge's schools to the detriment of children from Tandridge itself.

Town Centre Retail and Leisure

The Caterham town carpark which was originally at Church Walk was sold by Tandridge so that they could finance and build their new offices in Oxted leaving Caterham with a long term and serious parking problem.

One of the biggest problems in Caterham Valley is that there is no town or station carpark which can be accessed 24/7. Both were sold off for redevelopment resulting in on street parking and congestion as primarily Caterham is a commuting town with people driving in from outlying areas to access the railway station. The Croydon Road which is the main road into the town centre is virtually a one lane road. The lack of effective policing by traffic wardens results in people parking all day in the town centre and so denies shoppers the facility to park.

There is little variety of retail outlets with a preponderance of takeaways, hairdressers and charity shops. There are no up market retail outlets in the main street and although the Precinct does offer some High Street chains, it is really the two supermarkets which attract shoppers to the town. The Miller Centre and Soper Hall are assets which must be cherished and preserved and retained.

Caterham is ideally situated due to its proximity to the M23 and M25. Gatwick Airport is also in close proximity. This makes it an ideal place to live and commute from. However, infrastructure must be in place to encourage residents to spend their leisure time and pursue their retail requirements in the area.

Health Services

The comments relating to the future of Healthcare provision in the Tandridge document are considered to be superficial considering the estimated growth in population over the next 20 years. In particular the TDC assertion that they were not able to get a response from GPs is not a reason to conclude that *"there is no indication of any specific requirements at present"* to cope with population growth.

The CR3 Forum Health data suggests that there will be pressures on the health services over the next 20 years and that this must be given serious consideration in the demand for increased numbers of houses.

The lack of leisure facilities, particularly open spaces, leads to inactivity resulting in obesity and depression. For wellbeing, green spaces must be maintained and the building of elderly accommodation and flats in office spaces without any garden space is undesirable. Timberhill Recreation ground must not be sold off for development as it is the only open space within the town where older people, families with young children and our youth can go away from their flats to relax and play. A growing population, particularly of the elderly, without supporting infrastructure is foolhardy and short sighted.

Heritage

The Soper Hall on Harestone Valley Road in Caterham Valley is a Heritage asset and every effort must be made to build on the success of the last few years to make this building viable in the 21st century for the people of Caterham.

East Surrey Museum is one of the oldest buildings in Caterham Valley. It is in a strategic position in the town and is used extensively by the children in the district.

Both the Soper Hall and the East Surrey Museum should be retained for future generations.

SITES

CAT001 Rose & Young

While this Parish Council supports redevelopment of this site, we believe it is vitally important that the new development enhances the townscape rather than just removing an eyesore.

There are two planning applications currently with Tandridge's Planning department **TA/2015/1926** for the demolition of the existing buildings and structures and erection of a mixed use building to provide retail space on the ground floor with 48 apartments (1, 2 and 3 bed) over with ancillary basement car parking and associated works and infrastructure and **TA/2016/138** for the demolition of existing buildings and erection of part 4, part 5 storey building comprising a hotel (Class C1) above a ground floor restaurant and commercial unit for flexible use (classes A1, A2, A3, B1, D1 and/or D2), together with landscaping and parking. Neither of these options is considered by Caterham Valley Parish Council to be a good compromise.

CAT013 Youth Centre & Drill Hall

There is a planning application currently with Tandridge's Planning department. Caterham Valley Parish Council is pleased that this site is going to be developed to a good standard with adequate parking and landscaping.

CT041 Maybrook House

This is one of the last remaining large employment centres in Caterham and Caterham Valley Parish Council would not support a change of use from commercial to residential without sufficient space being available at an alternative venue in the Caterham area to accommodate the businesses that would be required to leave or to accommodate those that wish to come into the town in the future.

038 Land at Waller Lane

To quote the former director of planning, Bob Evans – if this land is ever developed, it is time to give up. Caterham Valley Parish Council would vigorously oppose any development of this site as it coalesces Caterham Valley and Caterham on the Hill. It is a wooded sloping site with many TPOs in place. It is an area of green space separating Caterham on the Hill with the Valley and needs to be retained and could be considered to be A.G.L.V.

044 Land at Fern Towers

If the garages are demolished for housing the result will be loss of car parking space. Harestone Hill outside Fern Towers has yellow lines in place so parking in the vicinity would be a problem adding to further congestion on adjoining roads which are already at saturation levels due to commuter parking.

047 Quadrant House

A change of use from office to residential has been granted. Caterham Valley Parish Council disputes that this site is suitable for 72 units and would be seriously concerned about adequate parking spaces for such a large number of apartments and subsequent traffic on to our already congested roads.

052 Timberhill Recreation Ground

Recent developments and the conversion or prospective conversion of many of Caterham Valley's commercial units to apartments has meant that none of these new developments has any important amenity space for local residents. Caterham Valley Parish Council would oppose any development on our current green spaces including but not exclusive to Timberhill Playground and White Knobs ground, both of which are listed in the HELAA. Timberhill is a valued and well used recreation area in Caterham by both children and adults and should be retained for future generations.

Caterham on the Hill have also listed green spaces where they would oppose development. Caterham Valley Parish Council believe in the importance of the Green Belt but are adamant that green spaces in built up areas are vitally important for the well being and general health of the local population.

Timberhill is a valuable green recreation and leisure open space near the town centre. It is used and valued by many residents. The playground was recently refurbished at a cost of £65,000. Caterham Valley Parish Council would strongly object to any development on this site.

053 Land at Church Hill to Harestone Valley Road

This character area is separated from the main part of Caterham Valley due to the steep slopes and elevated position. It provides extensive views across the valley towards St Mary's Church. Developments in this area are all screened due to the vegetation and nature of the landscape. Removal of the trees would be contrary to TDC's Harestone Valley Design Guidance Document. We do not consider this site developable as it would seriously undermine the views and outlook up the Valley slopes and have a detrimental effect on the Caterham Valley landscape.

016 Longsdon Way – Land at Godstone Road, Caterham

Caterham Valley Parish Council agrees with the CR3 Forum Neighbourhood Plan assessment of this site that under current policies it is undeliverable. Known to residents as Wideacre, it extends from Longsdon Way to the bypass. This is an Area of Great Landscape Value (AGLV) and when viewed from Tupwood Lane to the Woldingham ridge has a view of open countryside with surrounding vegetation.

This land, a field, should be excluded from the list of deliverable and developable sites as supported by TDC's designation of AGLV and various inspectors' appeal decisions. In the mid-1970s, the owner's application for housing on this Green Belt land was refused at appeal. Subsequently, TDC raised its protected status by defining it as an AGLV as it forms a rising backdrop to the built-up lower levels, being a continuous area of the Green Belt running from the other side of the A22 road, separated by the road.

Over the years, the owners, Croudace Ltd (Croudace Homes), have tried unsuccessfully in local plan consultations, to re-define this field as developable, but inspectors have consistently supported its AGLV status, confirming its vital landscape value. For example, in the Tandridge District Local Plan - Inspector's Recommendations, considered and adopted by the Council's Planning and Environmental Protection Committee on 7th November, 2000, the representations by Croudace Ltd (DHG076 on Policy HO4 and DHG078 on Policy H06) were rejected.

SUMMARY

Caterham Valley Parish Council feels that many of the numbers of units on these sites have been decided without any real qualification. The number of new sites suggested in the HELAA is considerably higher than those suggested as developable in the CR3 Neighbourhood Plan.

Caterham Valley Parish Council have also reviewed the comments made by Caterham on the Hill Parish Council, Warlingham Parish Council and Chaldon Village Council and fully endorse their findings and suggestions.

10th February 2016